

Laboratories for the 21st Century

Executive Meeting Summary

September 8, 1999

On September 8, 1999, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA's) Assistant Administrator for the Office of Administration and Resources Management, Romulo Diaz, Jr., chaired a meeting with 23 public and private sector attendees to discuss EPA's proposed Laboratories for the 21st Century (Labs21) Initiative. The meeting followed the opening ceremonies for the Labs21 conference during which several presenters discussed opportunities to improve the environmental performance of the nation's laboratories.

Prior to the meeting, attendees received copies of EPA's preliminary plans for the Labs21 initiative in two mailings dated July 7 and August 13, 1999. The preliminary information described five components of the proposed Labs21 Initiative. The five components provided the framework for the September 8 meeting. They are listed below along with the comments solicited during the meeting and are followed by a list of additional issues that arose during the meeting. The Appendix includes the list of meeting attendees.

Voluntary Goals for Laboratory Energy and Water Efficiency

- Several people thought it was very important that each Labs21 member establish its own voluntary goals. Mr. Diaz suggested that the goal-setting process would be a collaborative effort between the individual member and EPA.
- Mr. Diaz emphasized that it would be important to develop standard measurement methods for energy and water consumption and other environmental performance indicators that would allow one to compare laboratories.
- EPA was encouraged to work with ASHRAE committee TC9.10, which is establishing energy efficiency criteria for laboratories.

Criteria for Labs21 Recognition

- One participant asked how EPA plans to define a laboratory (e.g., should a certain percentage of the facility contain traditional laboratory space?).
- Another participant asked if EPA would make a distinction between new construction and retrofits.
- One participant cautioned against making recognition too easy to achieve. He cautioned against being accused of helping companies "greenwash."
- A participant encouraged EPA to recognize partnerships not just facilities. She suggested that at her facility it was the collaborative partnership that deserved recognition. Another participant agreed and encouraged EPA to recognize utility companies and ESCOs too. Yet another

participant suggested recognizing the corporate decision makers.

- One participant encouraged EPA to examine Steve Anderson's Strat Ozone Awards. *{Editor's note: ERG is investigating.}*
- Another participant suggested examining the U.S. Green Building Council's LEED award criteria.
- Several participants encouraged EPA not to penalize the proactive laboratories that have already adopted aggressive energy and water efficiency technologies. This means the awards should not be based on a percentage improvement.
- One participant encouraged EPA to examine health and safety issues too.

National Database of Current Laboratory Energy and Water Consumption

- Several commentators thought sharing information would be very beneficial. Others, however, were concerned about divulging confidential business information.
- Mr. Diaz suggested Labs21 membership would include both bilateral and multilateral aspects. Members would have a bilateral agreement with EPA in which they would divulge information that EPA would aggregate before sharing with others so that individual members could not be identified. The multilateral aspects would allow EPA to share success stories that could be used to encourage and demonstrate to others what is possible.
- One participant stated that his company developed a one-page form asking about hospital energy consumption. He reported that 80 to 85 hospitals responded and attributed the high response rate to the simplicity of the form. He also explained that when reporting the data, individual hospitals are not identified. A hospital might know, for example, that they are bar chart 22, but would not be able to identify the other participating hospitals. When writing success stories, his company frequently omits hospital names for confidentiality purposes.
- Several additional participants encouraged EPA to keep the reporting requirements simple. If the reporting requirements are onerous, participation will be low. One commentator stated that his facility does not participate in Energy Star because it found the reporting requirements too burdensome. He emphasized that there must be a very tangible benefit to reporting.
- Another participant noted that the design of the database would determine what kind of reporting is required.

National Recognition of Labs21 Champions

- There was general consensus that EPA should recognize champions once a mechanism for identifying them has been established.

Forums for the Exchange of Technical Information on Energy and Water Efficiency

- Everyone agreed that forums such as the Labs21 conference are an excellent way to share information and promote energy and water efficiency.

Additional Issues

- Mr. Diaz suggested regulatory relief might be an incentive for participation in Labs21. He suggested Labs21 could be part of the Project XL initiative. An individual from EPA's Office of Reinvention concurred and briefly described how Labs21 and Project XL could be related.
- There was a general consensus that one time improvements were insufficient and that EPA should emphasize long term savings and environmental benefits.
- One participant encouraged EPA to work with instrument manufacturers to promote energy efficiency. She suggested that the heat generated by laboratory equipment is very wasteful.
- Several participants emphasized the importance of metering facilities in order to understand how energy is used in a laboratory. Some participants believe metering to be prohibitively expensive; while others believe it to be the most important part of such an effort. Two participants shared stories of significant savings resulting from metering.
- Several parts of the discussion emphasized the need for ensuring confidentiality. Some companies consider their resource consumption information to be proprietary and encouraged EPA to develop mechanisms to protect the information.
- One participant encouraged EPA to support a formal partnership between government, industry, and academia to promote laboratory energy efficiency.
- Another participant asked if EPA would consider preparing a best practices guide to highlight the system that laboratories should apply when examining their energy and water consumption.
- One participant wanted to expand the emphasis beyond energy and water consumption to include other environmental considerations. One example he mentioned was an examination of indoor air quality issues related to materials selection.
- A participant discussed his company's success with OSHA's voluntary protection program (VPP) and suggested using it as a model. {*Editor's Note: Visit <http://www.osha-slc.gov/OshDoc/Directive_data/TED_8_1A.html> for additional information.*}

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